

Get the 4-1-1 on telemarketers

This month marks four years since Missourians started enjoying peace and quiet from unwanted telemarketing calls by signing up for the state's No Call list. Now more than 2 million residential phone numbers are on the list, meaning more than half of all Missourians are protected by No Call.

The key to a successful No Call list is enforcement, and we are aggressive in this area. Just in the last month, we have collected \$97,000 from telemarketers who called Missourians on the No Call list. That money, part of more than \$1.3 million collected so far, goes right back into the No Call program in order to keep it free for Missourians.

Our state No Call law allows us to go after telemarketers both inside Missouri (intrastate calls) as well as those outside Missouri (interstate calls). This is in contrast to the federal Do Not Call list, which only regulates interstate calls. We have found that about half the reported violations of the law come from telemarketers inside Missouri.

The decrease in telemarketing calls has led to another benefit: a marked decrease — more than two-thirds — in the number of complaints of telemarketing fraud since the No Call law has been in effect.

Those on the No Call list often tell me how effective the law has been in

BE A SAVVY CONSUMER

By Attorney General
Jay Nixon



Missourians can join the No Call Team at any time:
Call toll-free 1-866-NOCALL1
or **Click** www.ago.mo.gov

reducing telemarketing calls. Yet there are still Missourians not on the list. They may not know about it yet, or may not know that signing up is quick, easy and free.

While the Missouri No Call law regulates most telemarketing calls, there are exemptions to the law. If they are not selling goods or services, calls from charities and non-profit organizations are exempt as are surveys and political calls. If you have an existing business relationship with a company or if you expressly give permission to be called on a contest entry or other form, that business may call you as well.

But remember, you have the right to tell a telemarketer — even those exempt from the state law — not to call you again, and federal law requires that they comply. We used that law to obtain ground-breaking agreements with four major telephone companies — Sprint, MCI, AT&T and SBC

— even though telephone companies are exempt from the Missouri law. Significantly, these companies have agreed to not call Missourians on the No Call list.

Your personal or business cell phone also is not covered under the state No Call law. We have tried to change the law, but legislation to include cell phones failed during the last two legislative sessions. We will be back in 2006 to push even harder for this change.

Con artists may still try to use the phone to pick your pocket or clean out your bank account, though. They have no regard for the No Call law, and you should be on your guard for callers who want to sell you get-rich-quick schemes or tell you that you've won a contest but that you have to pay taxes or fees to claim your prize. Don't fall for these scams, and report these calls immediately to local law enforcement and my office at 1-800-392-8222.

The vital part of the No Call Team continues to be you. By signing up for the No Call list and reporting violations that are then dealt with quickly by my office, you have made it one of the most successful programs in the country. Remember, you are the one on the front line — the telephone line — and we still need your help.

If you suspect you have been defrauded: Call 1-800-392-8222 or Click www.ago.mo.gov